

Why We Did This Study

Seattle has about 9,100 parking spaces that are controlled by meters or pay stations, and are in operation 10 hours per day, 6 days per week for about 300 days per year. The City collected approximately \$16.5 million in parking ticket revenue in 2004.

Aging ticketing technology and new procedures required as a result of the City's current conversion from meters to pay stations (705 pay stations installed to date), could affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the City's parking enforcement.

In January 2005, the City Council asked us to survey other jurisdictions and review the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) parking enforcement practices in three areas: 1.) ticketing technology, 2.) pay station enforcement, and 3.) performance measures.

We conducted field observations with SPD and interviewed officials from 13 cities. Our recommendations were developed in cooperation with SPD and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT).

<http://seattle.gov/audit>

To view the full report, click on the link above. For more information or suggestions for future audits to Susan Cohen, Seattle City Auditor, at (206) 233-3801 or susan.cohen@seattle.gov.

RESPONSE TO CITY COUNCIL STATEMENT OF LEGISLATIVE INTENT (SLI)

Improving Parking Enforcement Efficiency

What We Found

Use of Technology: The breakdown rate of the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) 10-year-old ticketing technology and the end of its vendor maintenance in 2008 will compromise ticketing system reliability. New ticketing technology can offer potential incremental improvements in geographical analysis, communication with tow vendors, reports, and data exchange. Also, four cities (Boston, Chicago, Sacramento, and Toronto) reported good results from an emerging technology for license plate recognition to assist in scofflaw and stolen vehicle recovery.

Recommendations: *We recommended replacing the hand held ticketing devices before 2008. Also, we support SPD's plans for a pilot project involving license plate recognition technology.*

Mitigation of Pay Station Effects: SPD found that it takes an average of three times as long to enforce a block face of pay station spaces compared to metered spaces. Four of the cities we surveyed (Miami, Portland, Sacramento, and Toronto) successfully use bicycle squads for some pay station enforcement. Also, SPD's Employee Involvement Committee (EIC) has implemented changes that have resulted in better enforcement of pay station areas.

Recommendations: *We recommended continuing the EIC and piloting the use of bicycles in 2006.*

Performance Measures: We found that Seattle measures its progress toward most standard parking enforcement goals. Seattle's performance on these measurements was within the range of the other cities surveyed. We identified two additional measures that are common to other jurisdictions and could benefit Seattle.

Recommendations: *We recommended using a new ticketing system to capture additional information (vehicle turnover rate, abandoned vehicle cycle time, etc.). We recommend that SPD consider methods for reporting on tickets by area. And we recommended that SPD and SDOT consider collecting data on violation capture rates.*



New enforcement strategies suggested by SPD's Employee Involvement Committee have been effective in mitigating some negative impacts of pay station enforcement.

Photo: Wayne McCann, Seattle Police Dept.